Xbox Ambassadors Celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day 2023

Events Taxel May 18, 2023

It's Global Accessibility Awareness Day and the Xbox Ambassadors Program is celebrating a huge community milestone in our efforts to spread the word about the importance of accessibility in gaming! We recently hit 1,000,000 Quests completed on the Xbox Ambassadors Accessibility Explorer Path, with over 18,000 unique Ambassadors contributing to that goal! This is a tremendous achievement unlocked by the Xbox Ambassadors community and we couldn't have done it without you. Give yourselves a big round of applause!

We also want to add a special thank you message to all the Xbox Ambassadors who participated from Anita Mortaloni, Director of Accessibility at Xbox. Anita and her team have worked closely with XA staff to create this experience for all of you, and she had this to say to the community:

"Our Xbox Ambassadors have a critical role in creating a community where everyone can and wants to play. It has been remarkable to witness the energy and commitment thousands of ambassadors had in learning about accessibility through the Accessibility Explorer Path, and it shows the level of dedication the ambassador community has in making play possible for as many people as possible. Thank you to all our Xbox Ambassadors for your work in building a safe, welcoming place for everyone to play and your commitment to accessibility. As they say, "when everyone plays, we all win" and you are all helping make that possible."

Our staff and community are grateful to Anita and her team for leading the way on accessibility at Xbox. Without the huge volume of progress they've made, we could never have created such a deep and engaging body of

Quests to complete along the Explorer Path. Even with this amazing progress, we're not done yet. To celebrate, we are going to continue adding new Quests every Season, because we can always keep learning about how to make gaming more accessible. We're also working on other ways to continue engaging and educating this community about accessibility in gaming beyond the current slate of Quests.

Today being Global Accessibility Awareness Day, we're continuing in our proud tradition of spotlighting individual community experiences with gaming accessibility. Read on below to see how accessibility has impacted the gaming lives of Community Champions, and to hear perspectives on why starting or continuing our journeys along the Accessibility Explorer Path is so important.

Community Spotlights

Spotlight: Xonatron

How would you describe the experience of following the Accessibility Explorer Path?
At first, it is an overload of content. Almost too much to consume. I loved the Microsoft Learn modules that test to see if you understand the content and help showcase misunderstandings.

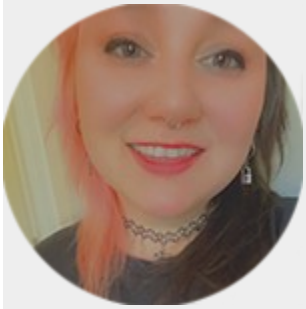
What impact did the Accessibility Explorer Path have on how you think about accessibility in gaming?
We were ahead of the curve with accessibility as an indie game developer. We put an enormous amount of effort to "empower the player" — our indie studio's philosophy. That said, the Xbox Accessibility Guidelines have helped us think of new ideas that our game engines can incorporate in the future. It's nice to have a list to reference. There is so much content out there, it's nearly impossible to consume and organize it all. So these efforts by Xbox really help out.

Why do you think it's important for gamers to learn about accessibility?

I think everyone has their own accessibility issues, so it might bring people together to understand their common ground.

What message do you want to share with other community members who haven’t yet started the Accessibility Explorer Path?
Try it out! A lot of content. I recommend the Microsoft Learn modules.

Spotlight: SammieChaos



How would you describe the experience of following the Accessibility Explorer Path?
The explorer path is very educational, I’ve learned a lot of new things about different types of accessibility needs.

What impact did the Accessibility Explorer Path have on how you think about accessibility in gaming?
It had a major impact, it shines lights on all accessibility needs, and how to use them, some of which I wouldn’t have known about before the Explorer Path.

Why do you think it’s important for gamers to learn about accessibility?
I think it’s important to understand how accessible features work because it can provide insight to other gamers, and may even open up options other gamers may not have even known they needed or would like to use.

What message do you want to share with other community members who haven’t yet started the Accessibility Explorer Path?
Take a look around, and learn something new! Accessibility is a useful tool; taking the time to learn new and fun things about accessibility can be beneficial to you and others.

Spotlight: SimonDarksideJ

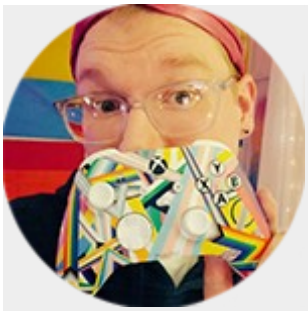
What impact has gaming accessibility had on your own life?
My son has special needs which has always proved challenging to connect with him however one avenue we do have in common is gaming, with the increasing rise in more and more accessible games, we have a vast array of titles we can play together or even cooperatively.

What games (that are accessible to you) would you recommend others try playing, and why?
When it comes to accessibility, Tacoma from Fullbright games stands out for its novel interaction system and showcasing a possible interface into the world to engage, communicate and re-live people's experiences. Beyond that, titles like Gears of War are a pinnacle of accessible access and coop gameplay that I've enjoyed countless hours playing with both my sons.

What impact did the Accessibility Explorer Path have on how you think about accessibility in general?
It expanded my reach and understanding when designing and building games to open up more avenues for more players.

Why do you think it's important for gamers to learn about accessibility?
The Accessibility track gives you an insight into the many different ways that players can experience a game, how the game can look and sound differently depending on a person's filter or needs, or if their access to control schemes is limited in some fashion due to how they can engage with controllers. The accessibility track is a first glimpse at the world of options that enable everyone to play together safely and successfully for the enjoyment of all.

Spotlight: MikiePlays



How would you describe the experience of following the Accessibility Explorer Path?
My experience with the Accessibility Explorer Path was very educational, rewarding and fun! The missions are simple and easy to follow and are very insightful into accessibility options and how important they are in gaming and media!

What impact did the Accessibility Explorer Path have on how you think about accessibility in gaming?
Before I started the Accessibility Explorer Path I was just starting to learn and advocate for accessibility in gaming, but reading more about accessibility options and how they work and the importance they have in gaming and media made me appreciate them even more. Now I'm an even fiercer advocate!

Why do you think it's important for gamers to learn about accessibility?
Simple. When everybody plays we all win. We all should be fighting for and advocating for more accessibility options in gaming! Disabilities shouldn't prevent someone from playing and enjoying gaming and programs like the XA Accessibility Explorer Path is a wonderful way to spread awareness!

What message do you want to share with other community members who haven't yet started the Accessibility Explorer Path?
If you haven't done any of the Accessibility Explorer Path missions yet, all I can say is do it! You've got nothing to lose but a ton to gain. You get sweet XP, a new badge for your profile, get the tools to be an effective accessibility advocate and you learn more about accessibility options and their importance! It's a win-win-win! I highly recommend starting your accessibility journey today!

Spotlight: CerebralPaul#921

What impact has gaming accessibility had on your own life?
It has given me enjoyment in my low times and lasting relationships through online play.

What games (that are accessible to you) would you recommend others try playing, and why?
LA Noire, allows you to auto drive and skip action sequences and enjoy an in-depth story that really draws you into the world. As Dusk Falls, [an] amazing story driven by the choices you make. Some of the deepest accessibility options in any game. You can adjust how quick time events work and other aspects of the controls that make it a much more approachable experience.

How would you describe the experience of following the Accessibility Explorer Path?
I enjoyed learning about different aspects of accessibility that don’t necessarily directly affect me.

What message do you want to share with other community members who haven’t yet started the Accessibility Explorer Path?
Take a few minutes every day and work your way through the paths, even if you aren’t disabled you probably know someone who is. A little knowledge can bring about better understanding of what different people deal with every day.

Spotlight: ctrlaltcraft

What games (that are accessible to you) would you recommend others try playing, and why?
Let's Build a Zoo has been a go-to of mine for a while now. Though the mechanics of the game revolve around a day/night cycle and timer, it's very forgiving. Additionally, being able to set the speed at which time progresses (including a pause function!) means I can really take my time with it, without feeling stressed and overloaded. On PC, I find it does not aggravate my arthritis at all.

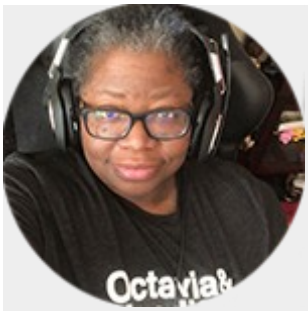
I have also enjoyed my time recently with a game called Littlewood (sadly not on Xbox so I understand if you don't want to include this in the blog). A cozy town-building farming-sim with exploration and light RPG mechanics, it only requires one hand on my keyboard to play! Also, I can turn off sound effects and background noises to help alleviate sensory overload.

How would you describe the experience of following the Accessibility Explorer Path?
Highly informative! And very exciting. It's exciting to see a business like Microsoft and Xbox taking accessibility so seriously. It draws from a myriad of resources and articles. It wasn't just slapped together like a business faking interest in accessibility to seem on-trend. You can tell the team that put all this together actually really cares about this cause.

What impact did the Accessibility Explorer Path have on how you think about accessibility in gaming?
It certainly opened my eyes to much more than just the struggles I face with gaming. There are so many different disabilities and struggles out there. If I were to ever make a game, I'd probably make it with all my own disabilities in mind, but would I consider those who are deaf or blind? Maybe not as much as I would like to think I would. Learning about the disabilities and experiences of so many people and the nuances of what features they enjoy or lack in games was really enlightening.

Why do you think it's important for gamers to learn about accessibility?
Because the voice of the masses is what developers will listen to. The more people on our side vouching for these features, the more likely developers are to include them.

Spotlight – Saffista



What impact has gaming accessibility had on your own life?
Gaming accessibility has made it possible for me to continue to play videogames despite things like hearing loss and repetitive stress injuries. Things like closed captions make it possible for me to follow in-game dialogue and things like tinnitus settings make sure that I can play games that used to trigger bouts of tinnitus peacefully. Also games that offer button remapping and long presses instead of rapid button pushes makes it possible for me to skip things like Quicktime events when I need to. I have had an Elite controller since they first launched because it is difficult for me to click thumbsticks without pain so remapping those clicks to the paddles on the back of the controller makes it possible for me to play the games that would be otherwise impossible for me to play.

What games (that are accessible to you) would you recommend others try playing, and why?
Off the top of my head I would recommend games like Celeste, Bastion, and State of Decay because of the adjustable difficulty levels); The Last of Us, and Horizon Forbidden West (because of the auditory accessibility settings); or most any game on Xbox with an Elite controller because you can do lots of customization in the Xbox Accessories app.

What Now?

Thanks again to all the Ambassadors who contributed to both the massive number of Explorer Path completions, and to our spotlights above! If you're feeling inspired to start or continue your own journey with the Explorer Path, you can follow this link, click "Accessibility", and get on your way. If you're not an Xbox Ambassador quite yet, you'll first need to join the program and complete the onboarding Quests to hit Level 1 and unlock the Explorer Path. Then you can go ahead and get started unlocking rewards as you learn about accessibility in gaming, why it's so important, and how it can help improve yours and others gaming experiences going forward.

If you're already familiar with the Explorer Path, feel free to jump back in or head to the Quests page to check out more Global Accessibility Awareness Day content from around Xbox.